

Hello, my name is [REDACTED] I am here to give my statement against the defendant. William Burns.

For nearly a decade, I have lived with the consequences of his actions. I suffer from nightmares, flashbacks and intrusive memories that I cannot control. My trust in people has been shattered. I find myself assuming that anyone – no matter how “normal” they may appear – could be hiding dark intentions. What happened to me has fundamentally altered the way I see the world.

Three months after I turned 18, vulnerable and seeking a fresh start, William Burns manipulated my faith, my hope and my circumstances. He presented himself as a man of God, someone who could guide me. Instead, he preyed on my weakness. His actions left me not only physically harmed but also spiritually and emotionally broken. I’m not a perfect person and never claimed to be. After all I met William in a detox facility.

We read the bible for hours together. I remember him telling me that God wants a woman to obey man, and I should listen to him if we wanted to be fruitful and live a lasting life. Which, I’ve always heard growing up; follow your husband of God.

I can only think that he saw me as a perfect candidate. She has no home. She has family troubles. No one will miss her.

I was excited when he offered to take me to Texas to help people in need after hurricane Harvey. This is my chance to give back to the world after all I’ve taken. This was my chance to prove to myself I can be something more. He told me to throw my phone out of the window for a fresh start and he would buy me a new one. I wish I wasn’t so stupid. But for the first time, I felt free in my new journey of adulthood. I remember seeing the signs “welcome to Georgia”. He pulled over and told me to drive. I reluctantly said I do not have a license. He told me he would help me and we are in this together. I was so scared driving through Atlanta. I was scared driving an extended pickup truck and could not see anything next to me.

I remember him asking my thoughts about porn. I told him it’s a natural thing. My life growing up wasn’t the best and unfortunately porn was a big part of my childhood. So I had all reason to believe that’s just what men do. He unzipped his pants and pulled out his phone and started masturbating. He received a phone call and put it on speaker, the man introduced himself as a detective and he quickly took him off of speaker. The only thing I gained from that conversation was the knowledge of a child, a tablet and a detective. He told me his child was in some trouble for using the tablet. That is whenever I learned William has his own children.

William had told me we were going to stop at his father’s house to get some money and then head to Texas. It sounded like their relationship was rocky when they spoke on the phone. William was not very nice to him. But coming from a broken home, who am I to judge. When I met his father I quickly realized his health was very poor. He was so nice and bought me a whole new wardrobe since the only thing I owned was the dress and flip-flops I was wearing. His dad gave him some money and we were on our way.

Somehow we ended up in a little town in the middle of absolute nowhere with one corner store that sold cigarettes and beer. I remember him finding this cute cottage on the lake. I found out that he paid for the whole month and the plan to Texas was off the table.

Our first night he asked me about my thoughts on polygamy. He pulled out the Bible and phrased it in a way where God condones this practice. I told him I was not interested in having multiple partners. He was visibly upset and told me that he thought I was the one. That nobody understands him and he thought I was the one person that might see through his eyes.

Being a people pleaser, I felt bad that he thought I was judging him. I told him I would consider it. He told me how he wants one husband and 3 other wives and for me to be his first. He told me that God wants us to be fruitful and multiply, and wants to have as many children as he can. I felt uncomfortable picturing my future and what it could be.

I remember asking him if I could use his phone, to which he declined. He kept saying he would get me a phone once he could make it to a town with a Walmart but that day never came. He started asking me to go take a shower so he could masturbate alone. That ended up becoming a routine. Things just got worse. I remember him leaving and coming back with methamphetamine. This was a drug I was not familiar with and in all honesty, not interested in. He offered me some and I declined. I was upset because I thought I was starting a new normal life. He got angry, he grabbed my neck hard and then released pressure still holding his grasp. He said he wanted to be intimate with me and this would make it more enjoyable. For the first time, he made me feel scared. He showed me how to use it, and told me to get on the bed. I'm feeling the drug now, my sensations are heightened. He started by making me feel comfortable and loved. It quickly turned into me saying no, please stop. Stop. However, I am a woman and I have no voice. No, is not a complete sentence. It will all be over soon, the more you fight the harder he gives it. I'm no stranger to being taken advantage of. But I was a stranger to being sodomized. Once he was done with me, I'll never forget him saying "you should really clean yourself out". I went to the bathroom, putting my back against the wall and sinking to the floor. What do I do? *What did I do?* Surely this isn't in the Bible.

The next day he went out and bought be flowers, I don't know if that was a sick twisted way to apologize or if he did it out of the kindness of his cold heart. Day by day, his eyes weren't soft anymore. One night came; he told me he wanted to have my children. He pulled out the Bible and told me that we have to love our children with compassion. He then told me how he wants us to sleep with our Children. He wanted to be intimate with them and show them unconditional love in the purest form. He said the first people to love their children are their parents and no child should grow up wondering what love is. He said if we have sex with them they will not lower their expectations with their partners. I felt sick. I was sick to my stomach. I felt like I was living in the twilight zone waiting to wake up. I had to leave, but how? I have no communication to the outside world. At the time I had no idea what town I was in. I had to be smart. I had to sit there with the devil agreeing to sleep with my future children. I just had to sit there and listen to this bullshit. He told me that he wanted to take me to Utah to live out his polygamy dream and have many children.

Then that night came. He told me to watch his porn with him on the bed. This is the first time he showed me his phone and the videos he's been watching. He opened up an app which needed a passcode and turned his phone away from me. This is where my nightmares come to life. There are no words that could describe the heart ache I felt. I had a pit in my stomach, the immediate feeling of wanting to run. He started to scroll through his library to which I saw hundreds if not thousands of pictures and videos of children. He showed me some pictures and all I remember is looking at the children's eyes. To me they looked so scared. They were all undressed and some were in different poses. But they all had the same expression. They had to have been younger than my baby brother who was 11 at the time.

He then clicks on a video that will forever fill space in my brain no matter how hard I try to forget. The sound alone plays on repeat if I go through a PTSD episode. There was a video of a baby, a literal infant. You just saw her little legs with the baby rolls, diaper off and a man holding the phone down, making disgusting sounds, penetrating the baby. I felt so helpless, I was so scared. I wanted to reach through the phone and grab the baby and run. He asked me what I thought I started questioning him asking where these children were and how did he get this content trying to get as much information as I could. I told him they looked scared and I didn't like this.

He got angry, he grabbed my neck again and smacked me, and his eyes were cold. He told me that the children were not scared. They enjoy what they do, they are pleasing their parents. He said that's what children should do... obey their parents. My mind went back to that phone call from that detective. He HAS children.

I remember telling myself to be brave. Agree with him, tell him what he wants. I told myself to wait until I had a fighting chance to leave. Wait until sunrise. We both didn't sleep at all the night. The sun came up and I remember thinking it's now or never. I remember looking at him and making a run for the door. I managed to open it and started running as fast as I could screaming for help. I looked back and he was right on my heels. There was truly nowhere to run. He stuck his arm out to his side and next thing I know I'm struck from the left and knocked on the ground. I remember my head getting pounded and my arm being yanked and my body being dragged across the pavement. He forced me back into the studio and went insane. He threw the vase of flowers he got right at me and cut my arm. He was screaming and yelling. Then there was a knock at the door, "Taney County Sheriff's office". I sighed a sigh of relief.

I did it, I made it. William ended up having a warrant and they took him. I told the police everything I know. I turned his phone in and I called his father. His father sent me 1,000 to run.

It has been almost nine years to the day, September 23rd, 2017 that I escaped my abuser. I would like to note how important it is to recognize that anybody can be a William Burns. Your teacher, your mechanic, your salesman. Just the devil disguised as an average Joe. I believe this man to be a danger to society, who continued to live this lifestyle even having the knowledge that I turned him into the Taney County Sheriff's Department in 2017. He continued to show his actions and how dangerous he is to humanity.

The abuse I endured was devastating. The physical violations, the manipulation through religion, and the exposure to unimaginable crimes against children are things that will never leave my memory. The images, the sounds and the fear remain with me. I live with post-traumatic stress disorder – a constant battle against flashbacks, anxiety, and panic triggered by sights, smells or sounds that bring me back to those moments. He also left me with a lifelong medical condition, a reminder that my body was violated in ways that cannot be undone.

We need to protect our worlds little feet that pitter patter the ground. One day inspiring to be a doctor, a firefighter or veterinarian. You hear these stories on the news and you're immediately disgusted. I had to live through that. I had to experience it firsthand. I had to sit there feeling like I just made a deal with the devil in order to survive.

I may never live a normal life. If I smell random scents, the flashbacks come in waves. If I hear certain sounds, my eyes play a movie that I cannot turn off. William Burns robbed me of my sense of safety, my ability to trust, and even intimacy with own marriage. He took pieces of my peace, my faith in humanity, and my hope for normalcy. For years I carried guilt and shame, wondering if I could have done more to protect others.

But today, I stand here determined to use my voice – not only for myself, but for the children whose voices were stolen. This man is not just a danger to me; he is a danger to society, especially to its most vulnerable members – children. His actions reveal a pattern of predatory, manipulative, and destructive behavior that will not simply stop on its own. He is a threat to every innocent child who deserves safety, love and a future.

Your Honor, no sentence could ever erase what he has done to me or to others. But I ask that justice be served to ensure he can no longer harm anyone else. My hope is that he is held accountable, so that others are spared from experiencing the pain, fear and lifelong consequences that I have endured.

To William, I will say this. You might have been my worst nightmare for all of these years. But today I am your worst nightmare. You may have tried to destroy me, but I am still here. I am stronger than your abuse. I am the voice for those you silenced. In the end, I will leave judgement day in God's hands.

Thank you for allowing me to be here today to give my testimony.